GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2774
ANSWERED ON:15.03.2016
Protection of Himalayan Region
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of deforestation reported in the Himalayas and the extent to which it has affected the ecological balance of North India so far;
(b) whether the Government has taken any steps to control and minimise the deforestation in the Himalayas and if so, the details thereof;
(c) whether there is any policy to compensate the densely forested States, for maintaining the forests, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons thereof; and
(d) the details of the steps taken by the Government to protect the environment in the Himalayan region?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) & (b) Forest Survey of India, Dehradun is carrying out the assessment of forest cover of the country biennially and the findings are published in India State of Forest Report. The latest report in the series is India State of Forest Report, 2015. As per this report, the total forest cover of the five Himalayan states of the country namely Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh is 1,32,529 square kilometers. There is a net increase of 121 square kilometers of forest cover in these states as compared with the India State of Forest Report-2013. No specific information has come to the notice of this Ministry regarding the extent to which deforestation has affected ecological balance of North India.

Protection and Management of Forests is primarily the responsibility of the concerned State and Union Territory Governments. The Central Government and State Governments are taking the following measures to check deforestation in Himalayas.

(i) Administrative measures: Patrolling of forest area, Network of check posts and mechanism of transit Permits to control illegal transport of forest produce, Control and regulation of saw mills etc.

(ii) Legal measures: Indian Forest Act, 1927, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and Environment Protection Act, 1986 and the rules, guidelines thereof.
(iii) Management measures: Working of forests according to approved Working Plans with involvement of local people in protection and management.
(iv)Financial measures: Financial assistance to the States and Union Territories under Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes and Externally aided Projects.
(v) A network of protected areas has been established. (National Parks, Sanctuaries, Project tiger areas, Project Elephants areas, biosphere reserves etc.)

(c) The Fourteenth Finance Commission in its recommendations has inter alia, recognized that a large forest cover provides huge ecological benefits but there is also an opportunity cost in terms of area not available for other economic activities and this also serves as an important indicator of fiscal disability. The Commission has assigned a weight of 7.5% for Forest Cover in the distribution formula of Inter se determination of the shares of taxes to the states. The states, in totality, have been provided more funds as a result of Fifteenth Finance Commission award and it will enable them to allocate more funds to the forestry sector.

(d) Besides, various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, the Ministry has launched the National Mission on Himalayan studies which aims to address key issues relating to conservation and sustainable management of natural resources in Indian Himalayan Region.

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